GPO 16—67244-1

# A DISCOURSE

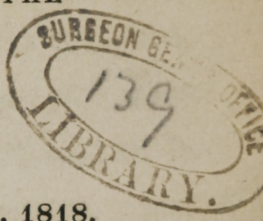
PRONOUNCED BY REQUEST OF THE

*SOCIETY FOR INSTRUCTING THE*

# DEAF AND DUMB,

AT THE CITY HALL IN THE

City of New-York,




ON THE 24TH DAY OF MARCH, 1818.

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*BY SAMUEL L. MITCHILL,*

ONE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE SOCIETY.

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NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY E. CONRAD,

*Frankfort-street.*

**At a meeting of the Society for instructing the Deaf and Dumb,**

*March* 24, 1818.

RESOLVED, *That the thanks of this Institution be presented to the Hon.* **Samuel L. Mitchill,** *for his Discourse, delivered pursuant to request, this day ; and that* **Alexander M'Leod, D. D.** *and* **James L. Bell, Esq.** *be a committee to wait upon him with this Resolution, and request a copy of the same for publication.*

**Extract from the Minutes,**

JOHN B. SCOTT, Sec'ry.

# DISCOURSE.

SOLITUDE is a state of being neither comfortable nor useful to man. A person of either sex so detached, is but a fractional part of the social unit. Of the progenitor of the human race, it was said by his Maker, that it was not good that he should be alone—so he made an help meet for him, under the form of woman, and brought her unto him. Their union was the origin of society. The numbers added by natural increase, constituted a family. When this became too great or unwieldy, a part was subtracted from the household to form another domestic cluster. The aggregate of families, by such operations of addition and subtraction, was a tribe.

By degrees the tribe multiplied to such an extent, that a separation became necessary. A part divided from the rest, and went forth in quest of a new settlement. Thus, by means of multiplication and division, another tribe was formed.

In a regular exercise of the powers by which fractions were consolidated to units, and units extended to families and tribes, larger communities grew. Villages and cities distinguished the labours of a people acquiring the strength and importance of a nation.

Thus man possesses a social disposition : the dawnings of history represent him so. He will always continue to associate with his kind. Even his *dissocial* passions require a social condition. Is he irascible? there must be some object of his anger. Is he vindictive? there must be some object of his spite. Does jealousy or envy disturb him? there must be some object of his apprehension or ill-will. Do hatred or malice agitate him? they too presume some object of dislike and malignity. Does he engage in contention or war? there must be somebody with whom he shall struggle or fight.

In like manner his *unsocial* feelings presuppose an established society. What is the hermit or anchorite, but a person who voluntarily withdraws from his family and neighbors? The ascetic and recluse merely retire from the occupation and bustle of society, to meditate the better alone. So distressing, however, is this situation, that it is provided for subjects by public authority, in certain cases, as a punishment. It is the privation of social enjoyment, that embitters the fate of the captive and the prisoner. The denial of his accustomed associations and employments, imparts poignancy to the sufferings of the exile, during his banishment. And the execution of an offender, as no longer fit for society, and therefore doomed to expulsion from this world, is the most severe of all the proceedings of the law.

The great medium of intercourse in all these positions, is the voice. It is not, however, that use of the laryngeal muscles, which enables the brute and inferior animal to produce their respective sounds. It is more

than the bleating of the lamb, or the roaring of the lion. It surpasses the musick of the feathered generation. The crowing of the cock, the cooing of the dove, and the song of the nightingale, fall very far short of it. Though in some animals, the throat may utter notes, and these may even amount to modulated tones, there is, nevertheless, no articulation. By articulation, is to be understood, the power of measured and diversified, as well as of significant and spontaneous sounds. I say, spontaneous and significant; for, although, as the learned Barrington relates, a bulfinch has been taught to pipe a tune, and as the great Leibnitz declares, a dog has acquired the pronunciation of words, yet both the fowl and the quadruped, were ignorant of the meaning attached to their utterance, and free from intention or ability to designate any thing specific.

Here, for our consolation, the actual examination of the vocal organs, offers interesting facts. In the inferior animals, even in the ape family, whose oran-otang, or man of the woods, approaches nearest to our species, the organization of these parts is found to be incapable of speech. A cry or a scream does not amount to regular enunciation. Had this animal the rational mind, he could not, through physical incompetency, display the enlarged powers of either a speaker or an orator. Camper and Blumenbach have settled this point.

The modulated and articulating voice, therefore, belongs exclusively to us. But we possess more. Ours is the attribute of soul, distinguishing us from all other terrestrial beings, and assimilating us to our

creator. The philosophical Cicero concluded long ago, from the just survey he made of this subject, that reason and speech (ratio et oratio) were discriminating characters of the human race.

Dumbness, or the inaptitude to pronounce articulate sounds, belongs to the beasts of the field. In this sense of the word, they are mutes.

Far different is the condition of sapient man. His is the function of articulated voice, governed by the will and the understanding.

There are two modes of exercising the voice. One is the employment of notes and tones in harmonic proportion, called musick. The signs of these sounds have been reduced to the significant symbols of the gamut. They may be read and understood by all who will take the pains to learn them. Their arrangement in due order and succession, is the nice and arduous business of musical composition. The other is the use of sounds by regular articulation, with emphasis and cadence, known by the name of language. These have been characterized by the graphic marks of the alphabet. They are intelligible to all who will seek their signification. Their arrangement into words and sentences, conformably to grammatical rules, is the art of literary composition. Such are the foundations of singing and of talking.

The performance of these two functions by the voice, has shown that the organs of speech are a most curious and admirable combination of a wind instrument with a stringed instrument. For while the trachea itself, is capable of being lengthened and shortened, the glottis can be contracted and enlarged, and the

ligaments of the larynx made to accompany with proper vibrations.

The charm of musick is confessed by all who have heard it. From the reedy pipes of Pan, to the metallic tubes of Handel; from the simple lyre to the complicated piano forte; from the dulcet strains of the artless damsel of the cottage, to the high-toned and wide-varied song of the tutored and professed performer, there is a correspondence in musical expression, with the sensibilities of our nature. Hence Plato places musick in the constitution of his projected republic; leaders of armies combine it with martial exercises; directors of civic festivals mingle it with the rejoicings of peace; and Zinzendorff and many more devout men, incorporate it with the public rites of religion.

Powerful as is the effect of musick, it is excelled by that of language. This is accomplished by the *sentiment* the tongue conveys. Here the sounds are full of meaning. They are loaded with significancy. They convey ideas from person to person. They carry expression through the trembling air. They are the vehicles of thought. They bear the tone of feeling and of intellect to indefinite distances.

The Almighty is represented as communicating his will, in this mode, to man. The words he spoke to the saints and the prophets, have been faithfully recorded. When that voice resounded, what a meaning was there!

In the effusions of the heart, we address this exalted and incomprehensible Being, with our voices. Whether we make confession of our sins, or offer up supplications for mercy; whether we praise him for be-

nefits received, or pray to him for succour in distress; whether we prostrate ourselves unconditionally before him, or ask in this our blind state, a ray of his guiding light; it is usual and it is reverent to give utterance to our emotions in words.

All these functions of the voice would be lost in air, unless there was some sense to which they were immediately adapted. This resides in the organ of hearing. Among the correspondences in nature, there is perhaps none more exquisite and admirable, than that subsisting between the throat and the ear. The fitness extends beyond the constitution of the individual person; it has the nicest relation to other beings of the like organization. In the contemplation of this subject, it ought not to escape observation, that sounds may be heard by the ear of the person who utters them. In this manner they may be modulated, harmonized, and rendered pleasant, as well to the speaker, as to the listener. It is likewise a worthy theme of reflection, that in the act of communicating to another by the voice, there is a chance that both parties may enjoy pleasure; but such is the kindness of providence in this particular, that though the passive party may grow drowsy at the tale, the narrator is sure to be delighted with his own performance.

There is an association, by means of the nerves, between the organ of hearing and the tongue. Instead of proceeding from their origin, direct and unconnected, to their respective places of destination, these sensitive filaments communicate with each other. While the *soft portion* (portio mollis) of the *auditory* nerve, spreads itself upon the labyrinth of the internal ear,

and constitutes the immediate seat of hearing, the *hard portion* (portio dura) of the same nerve, despatches a branch to join a branch of the fifth pair, and to form by their union the (chorda tympani) cord of the drum.

This fifth is called the *gustatory* pair, because it sends a branch to the tongue; which is an instrument of speech. This branch comes from the *inferior maxillary nerve*, that reflects a twig to the ear, to be engrafted with the twig of the seventh, just mentioned.

The connection might be traced further, by following the third pair of cervical nerves along their distribution to the outer ear; and by examining the constitution of the *cervical plexus*, and of its manner of supplying the larynx with nerves.

The eighth, or wandering pair of nerves (par vagum) after distributing twigs to the tongue and larynx, interlaces with the cervical plexus, and thus aids in sustaining the relation between the organs of hearing and of speech. You may learn the more particular organization of the ear, from VALSALVA and DUVERNEY.

The ear is the part of the body specially intended for social purposes. It appears from examination, that it is singularly constructed. There are two parts that may be termed *external;* one of which communicates with the atmosphere through the outside of the head, and the other through the inside of the throat. The former is distinguished as the outer passage, and the latter as the eustachian tube. Between the two is placed the internal organ of hearing. The tympanum with its catenation of little bones; the vestibule, the cochlea and the semicircular canals; and above all, the

delicate expansion of the auditory nerve; are in their intermediate stations. That this important function might not be interrupted by slight or ordinary causes, the more precious portion of the organ is protected by an osseous case. Its remarkable hardness has given rise to the name of os petrosum, or the rocky bone. The protection it affords, surpasses that of any other part of the frame. The liver, the spleen and the brain itself, are exposed and insecure, in comparison of the membranes, bones and nerves of hearing. These are remote from outward accidents; and locked up, besides, in the strongest box of the body. Such precautions for their security, show the extraordinary importance attached to them, by their Maker.

Hearing is the sense to which life peculiarly inheres in diseases. It seems to survive all the rest. Many are the instances of the ear being awake, when the eye, the nostril and the palate are asleep. Cases are recorded, where the auditory nerve was sensibly alive, when the other seats of sense appeared to be dead. The widow's son, who was excited to life, as he was carried on the bier towards his burial place; and Lazarus, who was roused to animation from the grave in which he had laid four days, were saluted by the Redeemer's voice. The ears of the former received the sounds, *young man, I say unto thee, arise;* and those of the latter, the words *Lazarus come forth.* It is very remarkable, that in these miraculous resuscitations, the stimulus was applied to the organ of hearing.

The atmosphere forms the connection between the person who speaks and the one who hears. The fact is worthy of being mentioned, that the same fluid which

sustains the vital energy of the individual by its action upon the lungs, qualifies him to be a social being, by performing the part of a messenger to convey intelligence. The percussion received by the air at the larynx, issues from the mouth in waves or undulations, varying in frequency, force and modulation. Proceeding at the rate of 1142 feet in a second of time, their velocity is so great, as at short distances, to seem instantaneous. Their passage has been considered as a most rapid flight. Homer represents his heroes as speaking winged words (ΕΠΕΑ ΠΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΑ). The ancient Greeks painted wings on the shoulders of zephyrs, and other personified winds. Indeed, the story of Mercury, the swift-moving herald of their sky, with his many wings and his manifold tongue, appears to be an ingenious allegory, to explain the celerity and meaning of articulate sounds. And Echo, the nymph of the rocks and the caves, was probably but another personification, to show how aërial tremors, repelled from hard surfaces, rolled back to the place whence they came.

As the human voice is enabled to propagate sounds, with peculiar significations, so the human ear is wonderfully adapted to receive and comprehend them. The ideas thus passing from one person to another, may be referred to three heads; *physical*, or such as relate to natural things; *ethical*, or such as concern accountable beings; and *logical*, or such as illustrate the method of reasoning upon the two former.

Of the physical or natural class of objects, all the senses take cognizance, according to their several capacities. The sight, the taste, the smell, and more

especially the touch, concur with the ear, in making man acquainted with the material world; but the ear possesses an almost exclusive jurisdiction over questions of a moral and dialectic kind. The sentiments of a rational mind, and the duties of an accountable soul, cannot be so well portrayed to the eye, nor subjected to the touch, nor perceived by the palate, nor comprehended by the olfactory nerves. They are destined for another sense: this resides in the auditory organ. Here these momentous communications are received, welcomed and comprehended. So extensive and sovereign is its cognizance, that the ear may be pronounced the door or seat of the moral sense.

The first words spoken by God to man, (Genesis II. 16, 17.) contained a rule of conduct, and a penalty for the breach of it.

The promulgation of the ten commandments from the top of Mount Sinai, was by words spoken (Exodus XX.)

The sublimest display of creative wisdom and power, is in the language of the Almighty himself, answering out of the whirlwind. (Job XXXVIII. 1.)

The prophets and ministers of his will upon earth, have also employed the voice in executing their commissions. They have addressed words to the ears of the people; words as expressive as they could be made, of precepts for observance, and of denunciations for disobedience.

In like manner, the sages and philosophers of ancient days, taught their pupils *by word of mouth.* The venerable Jacob telling his assembled sons what should befal them in the last days (Gen. XLIX. 1.); Pilpay,

reciting his fables or moral inventions, to instruct a Hindu audience; and Socrates, discoursing to his Athenian school; are subjects sufficiently impressive to invite the painter's skill.

Naturally and easily, through the ear, the freeman becomes acquainted with his rights, and his obligations. He learns to abhor slavery, and to make a discreet use of liberty. He is informed he must so use his own, as not to invade his neighbor. The dogma is propounded, directing him to act in every case, as if the rule by which he then acted, was the rule of universal action. He is ordered to do unto others, those things which he would that others should do unto him.

He learns that he is a depository of a portion of the popular sovereignty. The elective franchise is explained to him. He discovers the qualifications and functions of officers. The duties of a legislator, sheriff and judge, become familiar to him, as do those of a juror, assessor and musqueteer. By degrees, the business of an arbitrator, executor and administrator, are unfolded to him. The relations of parent and child, husband and wife, master and servant, guardian and ward, ought to be studied by him. In short, after knowing how to estimate himself, and to respect his fellow-creature, he rises to the dignity of knowing, and of venerating the Author of all.

The practice of writing and of printing, has produced many curious and interesting effects upon society. Among others is the contrivance of recording sounds, and in a certain degree of rendering them visible and permanent. By these two arts, reading is substituted for hearing; the printer fills the station of the

rhetorician; a sheet of paper coloured by types, answers the purpose of an oration; and a personal attendance on the forum, is superceded in a considerable degree, by the typographical reports of its proceedings, brought home to our chambers. Nothing has wrought such harm to the speaker, as printing. It has, in a great degree, removed the necessity of declamation. By the examination of printed or written documents, the members of deliberative bodies may become as intelligent as the orators, and that without their aid. And eloquence, as the sagacious Professor Adams observes, less courted now than of yore in the tribunal and the senate, has ascended with her talent of persuasion, to her more appropriate abode in the pulpit. The great principle in these operations, is, that the eye can comprehend the sign of a sound, and understand its exact signification, when there is no sound in the ear. On this basis rests the system of instruction for the deaf and dumb, as I shall presently show.

In the mysterious dispensations of divine providence, some persons are affected by diseases before birth. They bring with them certain defects and incapacities. It would require an auditory of physicians to listen to the long enumeration of such connate infirmities. Among these, is an incomplete organization of the ear. Though they become inhabitants of this noisy world, every thing is silent as to them. The vibrations of the air produce no more effect than upon impassive walls. The messages they bear are lost, because there is an impossibility of delivering them. No pleasure, no instruction can be received from that

quarter. Every species of knowledge by this avenue, is quite shut out.

This condition is the wore worthy of serious consideration, as it was not produced by the vice and intemperance of the sufferer. It is a visitation for which he is not to be blamed. In the distempers engendered by criminal conduct, as by lewdness and intoxication, the hand of the benevolent is daily and hourly extended for relief. We consider the immorality as merged in the disease, and contribute our mite without hesitation. How much stronger is the claim of our unfortunate brethren, who never brought upon themselves this calamity, by a dissolute or profligate course of life! No! they were from the beginning, disqualified from receiving parole communication.

We owe much, more in reality than the pride of many permits them to acknowledge, to our mothers. What can equal the tenderness of the female parent, to her child? She moulds her offspring to habits of action; she instils into it principles of conduct. The most early and important lessons of life, are derived from this source. Mothers! know ye, and practice, the duties of your stations! You prepare citizens for their diversified walks of life. Consider, that much of their future success or disappointment, is derived from you. More impressive, more lasting are your lessons, than the boasted lectures of academy or college. Where you are virtuous, intelligent, and decorous, the little ones, by imitating the beautiful pattern, become also good, wise and well-behaved: when the contrary, the house is a polluted den. Such an exemplary mother is an in-

valuable treasure, both to the commonwealth and to her family. Let her be prized by some moral denomination of worth, for her price cannot be rated in current money. Form the minds of your children to sentiments of love and affection, of attachment, and of duty, and these will generally be indelible. It is mostly through the neglect of the parent, that the weeds of disrespect and ingratitude take root in the garden of the mind. For myself, educated in my days of infancy and childhood, by one of the most exemplary mothers that ever reared a son, I feel, I hope, as I ought to feel, how parental care conciliates filial regard. Yea! let it go forth, and may it ever be retained in the memory, that the household is the nursery of the republic, and that there the mother has the chief direction!

The deaf children now standing in your presence, fellow citizens, have never heard, as you and I have, the voice of maternal love. The accents of affection issuing from the mother's voice, are unknown to them. The salutations of the brisk morning, and the blessings of weary eve, have made no impression. They have never been composed by the melody of the lullaby, nor by the sweetness of the cradle-hymn. Think of the emotion of a mother, speaking and singing to her deaf offspring. The effort to be heard is vain. This is afflicting enough: but this is not the whole. She recollects that not a single sentiment of morality, piety or duty can be thus conveyed.

In healthy cases, as the child advances in growth and time, the organs of speech begin to act. By imitation, the voice pronounces the sound that the ear has caught; and thus the junior members of society, speak

the dialect of the persons with whom they associate. But in the case of the persons before you, no sounds were received by the ear; and, of course, there was no imitation to be made by the voice. The fond mother discovers that dumbness enchains the faculties of the babe. To the misfortune of deafness, is added the incapacity of a mute. In vain she encourages the suckling to exercise its lips, by forming the easiest sounds. He is unable to combine the most ready labials, or to salute her with the endearing title of *mamma*. After all her efforts to teach it, not a sentence, nor even a lisp of language is heard. While the lips, and the tongue, and the throat, perform their other functions, they utter no articulate sounds. She sighs and weeps at the discovery, that the child who was born deaf, is also dumb. Reluctantly, and with piercing grief, she foregoes the pleasure of hearing its incipient prattle, and resigns the delightful task of teaching it the modes of correct enunciation and the principles of virtuous demeanour.

To these the face of nature wears the garb of universal and perpetual silence. The breezes whisper, the brooks babble, and the birds warble, in vain. The clatter of the city, the hum and buzz of business, and the clamour of the inhabitants, are nothing to them. They are equally insensible of the angry howling of the tempest, the threatening roar of the ocean, and terrifying burst of thunder.

For them, literature is the same as if it had no existence. The rhapsodists of Greece, and *Improvisatori* of Italy, could awaken no attention. The great orators of ancient, and perhaps the greater of modern

days, would address them to no purpose. The plain expression of prose cannot be distinguished from the ornamental measure of verse. They can in no wise conceive how the thread of speech is spun, how it is wove into a discourse, and how it is embroidered with the flowers of diction.

They can hold no verbal communion with their relatives or neighbors. They are equally unconscious of the accents of love and friendship. Should a narrating grandsire offer them his tale of adventures and exploits, they are incapable of accepting his gift. The most able professor might exhibit facts, and institute reasoning upon them, without being in any degree understood. Though his life depended upon it, one of these unfortunates, if the cry of alarm, or the shout of danger was sounded, would be wholly beyond its reach. Was an *angel* to make him a visit, there would be need of some other mode of saluting and conversing, than by words.

They are incapable of joining in the audible acts of devotion. A family assembled at prayer, is a phenomenon to them. A society of the faithful, congregated in a church, is a still greater wonder. They hear nothing. From their other senses, however perfect, they can derive no adequate idea of a God. Are you prepared to hear that a human being, deaf and dumb from his birth, is an atheist? I do not mean by this query to insinuate, far less to assert, that such a person is in a state of *disbelief*, from a wantonness of knowledge, but that he is in the condition of an *unbeliever*, through a lack of information.

But, I have the satisfaction of stating to you, that the incapacities I have enumerated, are susceptible of alleviation. The law does not consider a person who is born *deaf*, and who remains *dumb* afterwards, as necessarily an idiot. The matured conclusion of our predecessors, has added to those privations, that of *blindness* to constitute such a form of degradation. A person, therefore, who is born deaf, dumb and *blind*, says Dr. Blackstone (Commentaries on the Laws, &c. vol. I. p. 304) is looked upon by the law, as in the same state with an idiot: but a person who grows deaf, dumb and *blind*, not being *born* so, and does not come under the description of an idiot or a lunatic, is said to be *non compos mentis*, a general name employed by Sir Edward Coke, to (1 Instit. p. 246.) comprehend those who are judged by the court of chancery, incapable of conducting their own affairs. Pursuant to this doctrine and practice, deaf and dumb are not deemed *non compotes mentis*, unless they are blind also, and that from birth. (Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. II. p. 497.) The originally deaf and dumb merely, may acquire understanding enough to devise property by testament. From stronger considerations, the same capacity and privilege appertain to those who are deprived of hearing, speech and sight, after having once enjoyed them.

The law thus, in consonance with right reason, allows to the deaf and dumb, the capacity to acquire knowledge. In a certain case of this kind, I have decided, as an inspector of the election, that a deaf and dumb man, offering himself at the poll, to vote, was qualified according to the constitution, and have re-

ceived his ballot. This judgment was predicated upon the knowledge of men and things, that he had actually acquired.

The faculties of such as are simply deaf, and consequently dumb, may be improved. Is authority demanded? I cheerfully give it. A christian audience can have none higher than that furnished by the author of their religion. He made the dumb to speak; (Matthew IX. 33.) he healed one blind and dumb, so that both sight and speech were enjoyed (Ibid. XII. 22.); he pronounced the word *Ephphatha* (be opened) to one who laboured under deafness and an impediment in his speech, whose ears were straightway opened, the string of whose tongue was loosed, and who spake plain (Mark VII. 32–35); he cast out a dumb devil, and the dumb spake, and the people wondered (Luke XII. 14.); he rebuked the deaf and dumb spirit of the tormented boy, charging it to come out and enter into him no more (Mark XI. 25.)

These occurrences show that the deaf and dumb were deemed worthy of being delivered from their disabilities by miraculous power. I regret that the famous picture of Christ healing the sick in the temple at Jerusalem, contains no patient of this sort in the group of persons presented for remedy. Palsy, rickets, lunacy, blindness, and some other diseases are there. The interesting object described by St. Mark, was probably omitted by Sir Benjamin West, as incompatible with the *unity of place*, in the composition.

Much *can be* accomplished for them by human means. *Can be done*, did I say? Let me correct myself, and say much *has been* done already. The pre-

sent undertaking is not an untried project, or visionary scheme of benevolence. No; it is an experiment that has been successfully made; it is a proceeding sanctioned by reiterated trial. The cautious have no place to rest a doubt upon. The enterprizing consider the great work as achieved. What remains is as plain as a school upon the plan of Lancaster.

The task was deemed by the ancients an impossibility. Lucretius has a sentiment about it, which has been translated thus:

> T' instruct the deaf no art could ever reach,
> No care improve them, and no wisdom teach.

Deaf and dumb persons may be instructed in four different ways. 1. by significant gestures; 2. by spelling words on the fingers; 3. by writing words and sentences at full length; 4. by actual articulation after the manner of those who hear.

By the first of these, the *Mimæ* of the Romans are reported to have made themselves understood on almost every subject, by all who beheld them. Some individuals of the Malay tribes in North America, are celebrated for the skill with which they convey every thing they wish by intelligible signs. The ingenious Mr. Dunbar, of Natchez, has explained, in a very curious memoir, the manner in which these gestures have been arranged into a system. A few years ago, I witnessed the performance of a native Ricara from the Missouri, who was a proficient in this mode of communication. It is by this method chiefly, that deaf and dumb persons among us, receive and impart ideas.

By the three other of these methods, a plan of regular instruction has been invented.

These will be considered under the two heads of the *British* and of the *French:* it being all the while remembered that both methods, which are *artificial*, practice the *natural* gesticulations, as far as they can be useful. The modes of teaching pursued by certain individuals, in Spain, Holland and Germany, are referable to the one or the other of these.

Of the British method, the first distinguished teacher, was Mr. Braidwood. He instructed pupils at Edinburgh. Mr. Green, a gentleman of New-York, placed a deaf and dumb son there about 1780. The succeeding year he visited the school, and wrote an account of it from London, to the late Mr. Bayley, professor of anatomy in Columbia College, &c. I cannot do any thing so much to the point as to read you the letter:

" The extraordinary nature of a discovery very " important to the human race, induces me to be " particular in giving you an account of the obser- " vations I had the satisfaction to make lately, on " my visit to Mr. Braidwood's academy at Edin- " burgh, for teaching the deaf and dumb, as well as " for removing impediments in the speech of those " who hear: especially as I conceive, setting aside " my own particular interest therein, that it is an " object well worthy the consideration of the bene- " volent part of the literati in every quarter of the " world.

" Upon my first interview with my son, who was " impatiently waiting to receive me, he very distinctly " addressed me, *viva voce*, with, how do you do, my " dear papa? and several other questions and answers. " I then delivered him a letter from his sister, which " he read without hesitation, not only in an audible " manner, but with significant gestures accompanying " his pronunciation of many words, such as write, let- " ter, papa and others; which plainly proved his ideas " of their meaning, were as clear and just, as his arti- " culation was proper and intelligible.

" I remained at Edinburgh nearly six weeks, and " was every day at the academy. During this time I had " the ineffable pleasure of marking the daily progress " of improvement in my boy, and in the other pupils, " as respected the knowledge of language, and the " actual acquisition of that most distinguishing mark of " rational beings, SPEECH: from which, by some unac- " countable defect in the abstruse organ of hearing, " they had seemed to be irremediably precluded.

" By means of this interesting art (from the crea- " tion unknown to this half century) a certain portion " of the human species is rescued from uselessness, " ignorance and lamentable inferiority, and rendered " capable of every useful accomplishment, every de- " gree of erudition, and all the advantages and plea- " sures of social conversation and enjoyment.

" I have seen many in this predicament; one of " whom is a principal officer in the custom-house at " Leith, a very gentleman-like agreeable companion. " There is at present, one of these pupils at one of the " universities; and I have not a doubt that Charles, if

" he live to a state of manhood, will be as thorough a
" master of languages as any in this kingdom.

" As a specimen of the degree of proficiency to
" which persons are capable of arriving, I enclose one
" composition among many that I have, consisting of 12
" lines in poetry, written by one of them, on seeing
" GARRICK act a few years ago. You may depend
" upon its being absolutely the unassisted performance
" of one whom I know personally.

" Many authors have lately mentioned this institu-
" tion as one of the most remarkable of this, or indeed
" of any other time, to wit, Pennant, Johnson, Arnot,
" Monboddo and others. Notwithstanding which, such
" is the astonishing nature of it, that it seems generally
" incredible.

" The powers and faculties of naturally-deaf people
" vary, and are graduated as far as among others who
" have the sense of hearing. But there appears in the
" former an universal appetite for knowledge; and of
" course, what to young persons, commonly seems a
" tax upon their time and pleasures, and is really a
" task, is undertaken with avidity by those, as the
" highest gratification: so fond are they of all sorts of
" learning.

" From this it is not improbable some uncommon
" genius may arise, whose turn for study (and attention
" to pursuits to which want of hearing may be rather
" favorable than otherwise) may be so great and suc-
" cessful in the arts and sciences, as that he may arrive
" at new excellence; and not only eclipse the lustre
" of all others, in some particular arts; but what seems
" paradoxical, throw new light and perspicuity upon

" metaphysical researches, which persons with all their " senses, have never attained to. This, perhaps, you " will think enthusiasm.

" It would be impossible to recite the various in- " stances of mental and literary qualifications, I have " had conviction of. Suffice it to say, that Mr. Braid- " wood, by his ingenuity and talents, doth teach them, " *in effect to hear, and in reality to speak.*

" His method in general is this. He first teaches " them to sound the vowels; next to place the tongue " and lips in such positions as to form with the conso- " nants, monosyllables. Thus by perseverance and " close application, he brings them gradually to know " how to articulate any word that is expressed by cha- " racters, either in print or manuscript. And in this " manner, by experience and great attention to his " mouth, his pupils begin to understand, *without hear-* " *ing* what is pronounced or said. Consonant to this, " is the motto he hath adopted, *vox oculis subjecta,* " the *voice subjected to the eyes.* His crest is a *bird* " *charmed by a serpent.*

" My son hath made uncommon proficiency for the " time; not only in speaking, but in reading, writing, " arithmetic and drawing; and bids fair to make a re- " spectable figure in life, notwithstanding his misfor- " tune of deafness. Having referred several of my " friends at New-York to you for these particulars, I " will be obliged to you to communicate them to all " such; and should wish for the sake of humanity, that " the knowledge of them might be universal." (Medical Repository, vol. 8. p. 73, 75.)—This justly distinguished teacher in Scotland, has been succeeded by

his pupil Dr. Watson, in England. His school is in London, the most prolific place, perhaps, on the terraqueous globe for the institutions called charitable. It does not appear to have established a society for relieving this class of persons, until 1792; when an asylum was opened " for the support and education of the deaf and dumb children of the poor." The benefits of it, have since been felt by many of those compassionate objects. They are admitted, as I understand, between the ages of 9 and 14; are taught to speak articulately, and to write; and are made to understand the meaning of letters, and of the sounds constituting speech. They are also instructed in arithmetic. By an acquaintance with penmanship and calculation, they become qualified for the common business of life. Afterwards, the acquisition of some of the most useful mechanical arts, enables them to earn a livelihood and to be comfortable. As the two volumes written by this practical labourer in the field, are before you in print, it is enough that I mention the work with respect, and refer to it for information, as a document of peculiar value.

In France, the Abbé de l'Epée gathered the deaf and dumb into a seminary of his own, and taught them. His successor, the Abbé Sicard, continues the business with the most encouraging result. His pupils learn to connect the powers of the letters in the alphabet, with signs made by the fingers of the right hand; to understand the meaning of letters, syllables and words, like other students; to reduce them to writing, according to the rules of orthography and syntax; to acquire other languages than their mother tongue; and in

short, to become masters of every thing that languages can convey to the mind.

In this latter plan, pupils are not taught pronunciation. M. Sicard has become convinced that the voice of deaf persons, not being modulated by their own ear, is necessarily harsh, uncouth and ungraceful. It is frequently difficult to be understood. He has therefore omitted it, as of no substantial service; resting the qualifications of his pupils on their manual alphabet; their conventional gestures; their reading, writing and composition; their ability to learn languages; and in fine, their capacity to attain every thing relative to language, except its sounds and vocal utterance. The scholars of his seminary, therefore, although instructed in the meaning and use of language, continue to be dumb.

From a neighbouring city, a missionary was sent, a few years ago, to seek in the kingdoms of Europe, the true art of teaching the deaf and dumb. The Rev. Mr. Gallaudet returned to his friends, a qualified instructor, upon the French system. He brought with him as an assistant, a most interesting man, Mr. Clerc. This person never heard a sound or uttered a word; being deaf and dumb from his birth. Yet he is so quick and intelligent, that he has become acquainted with both the French and English tongues, which he writes with grammatical accuracy. A letter which I received from him a few weeks ago, is a correst piece of English composition. In him we have an example of the ability of a person, himself deaf and dumb, to give the necessary instruction to others labouring under similar disabilities.

Nor is this the only instance. In the city of Bourdeaux, Mr. Gard is a teacher in the Royal Academy there, for instructing the deaf and dumb. Although he is now, and always has been, unable either to hear or to speak; yet he is perfectly qualified for his place, and performs its duties in a becoming and satisfactory manner. I know by his writing that he understands English composition, as well as if he had the sense of hearing, and had spoken the tongue all his days. [Here the two letters were produced.]

Such are the two plans of instruction for the deaf and dumb. It is for you, fellow-citizens, to decide whether either of them is worthy of adoptation in this city.

We live in an age distinguished for benevolence.

Already has it freed the slave from his bondage, and bestowed upon him the invaluable blessing of freedom.

The criminal code has been mitigated, and the convicts, instead of expiating their guilt by death, are permitted to labour in confinement, with the hope of penitence and amendment.

As these humane reformations regard liberty and life more than the culture of the understanding and of the heart, examples may be demanded, more apposite to the present inquiry. Here they are.

In churches erected for the worship of the Deity, the lessons of the reader, the responses of the congregation, the sermon of the preacher, and the hymns and psalms of the choristers, impart edification and comfort to those who can hear and speak. But in these acts the deaf and dumb have no participation.

When the goodly line of young persons is extended before the catechist, the principles and doctrines of religion are inculcated by words. But to these exercises the deaf and dumb have no approach.

In common schools and colleges, literary and moral discourses are delivered by the teachers to the students, and recitations and compositions submitted by pupils to their instructors. All pre-suppose the use of the ear and the tongue. But from all these exercises, the deaf and dumb are excluded.

The courts of law, the halls of legislation, and chambers of debate, furnish materials for the most profound reflection, to those who can understand the proceedings. These are performed by the voice and addressed to the hearing. But these exercises are nullities to the deaf and dumb.

That social and domestic circle, where the amenities and suavities of life subsist, and are enjoyed; where the diversified occupations of the household are ordered, and done; where rational and cultured man holds converse with his friend, and both are content; that society of the fire-side, I say, presumes speech and listeners. How hard is it for the deaf and dumb, that they know nothing about it!

[Here the deaf and dumb children were exhibited.]

Unoffending Outcasts! how have the high and the mighty overlooked you! Your kinsmen, too often, as if ashamed to own you, have kept you behind the door, or removed you from notice. The humane and kind-hearted have shunned you, and passed by, as though they saw you not. The zealous and pious, who equip missionaries with Bibles, for converting the heathen in

India and the remotest isles, have omitted to communicate the glad tidings of the gospel to you. That tongue-tied eloquence seems to speak to the philanthropists—I perceive its meaning:—IT CHARGES THEM, ON THEIR RESPONSIBILITY, TO CONSIDER YOUR CLAIMS.

NEGLECTED INNOCENTS! I know full well how incapable you are of hearing my words. But you have eyes, and the intuitive sense of physiognomy, which often influences the nursling at the breast. You may learn from the observation of my countenance, that I am no prophet—too forgetful of the past, too heedless of the present, the dark and distant future has never been disclosed to me. I therefore predict nothing as to your fate. Still, though I fail to reveal what *will* happen, you have the consolation of learning from my face and manner, what according to my judgment, *should* happen. They, to whom the goodness of their heavenly father, has given hearts to feel, and treasures to spare, OUGHT to take care that intellectual and spiritual food should be duly administered to your famished souls.—Even while I speak, you may behold in the look and demeanour of this very numerous and most respectable assembly of citizens, a sign of the times :—It is an augury of an approaching event—I feel inspired to foretel it—DEW AND MANNA ARE READY TO DISTIL FOR YOUR REFRESHMENT.

# APPENDIX.

## TO THE PUBLIC.

### THE NEW-YORK INSTITUTION

*For the Instruction of the*

## DEAF AND DUMB.

THE objects of this Institution are "for the "purpose of affording the necessary means of "Instruction to the Deaf and Dumb,—and also to "provide for the support and maintenance of "those in that condition, whose parents are una- "ble to maintain them during their course of "tuition."

It is not contemplated that this Institution should be exclusively charitable,—but also to educate all those whose circumstances will enable them to pay for their tuition.

## NUMBER OF DEAF AND DUMB.

SIXTY-THREE are ascertained to be residing in the city of New-York, and EIGHT in the vicinity.

It is believed the number, when discovered, will amount to ONE HUNDRED, in the city of New-York alone.

Those in the city, as far as their ages are known, are as follow:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | —— | 4 years of age, |
| 4 | —— | 6 |
| 4 | —— | 7 |
| 6 | —— | 8 |
| 2 | —— | 9 |
| 4 | —— | 10 |
| 2 | —— | 11 |
| 3 | —— | 12 |
| 2 | —— | 13 |
| 2 | —— | 14 |
| 7 | from 15 to | 18 |
| 3 | from 18 to | 22 |
| 2 | from 28 to | 30 |
| 15 | Children, ages unknown, believed to be | |
| —— | from 6 to | 14. |
| 57 | | |

*THE humane and charitably disposed citizens and inhabitants, are appealed to with confidence, to further the views and promote the objects of the* **New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb.**

*No occasion has ever presented itself to the benevolent, more laudable in its nature; and, it is presumed, that no inducement need be offered to ensure patronage and support, other than a fair understanding of its merits.*

*In claiming a due proportion of public munificence in their undertakings, the* Managers of the New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, *request that this application may be properly considered, and duly appreciated by a discerning community; and that from their virtuous convictions, and sympathies, they act according to their best feelings and inclinations;—from these they anticipate the most grateful success; and will, to their anxious wishes for the promotion of so great an object, superadd their unremitted exertions, in giving efficacy to such means as may be placed at their disposal.*

JOHN B. SCOTT, Sec'ry.

*New-York, March* 26, 1818.